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ABSTRACT

At the end of the fifth year of a successful, ever expanding freshman seminar program, students in selected sections of the course, who were also enrolled in developmental reading/writing, were asked to evaluate the worthiness of the goals in terms of their own freshman year experience. The fifth year was a new pilot year for the program. Some sections of the freshman seminar were integrated with writing courses. The two sections of students, members of the class of 1995, evaluated the goals as part of a final writing assignment, knowing that what they wrote would be used to help plan the course for next year's freshmen. Students evaluated goals set by prior students, administration, and the faculty member of the course. Results indicated that: (1) students' goals for the course remained stable over time, but there was a new priority of 9 of the 10 goals compared to the goals for the 1991-1992 course; (2) students supported the administration's goals and had little difficulty organizing them in priority order; and (3) students had no trouble in sharing their order of priority for faculty members' goals. The paper includes the rank order priority of the class of 1992 goals and the class of 1995 goals; the original goals of the freshman seminar course, students' rank order of the administration's goals, and the students' rank order of faculty members' goals; and topics for the seminar. Contains seven references. Questions based on readings for the seminar course, directions for the writing assignment, and a sample student paper are attached.) (RS)

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*The Freshman Seminar:
Developmental Reading-Writing Students*

Evaluate Goals

*Set by Administration,
Faculty, and Prior Students*

**NEW YORK COLLEGE
LEARNING SKILLS ASSOCIATION**

Annual Symposium

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At the end of the fifth year of a highly successful, ever expanding Freshman Seminar Program, students in selected sections of the course, who were also enrolled in developmental reading/writing, were asked to evaluate the worthiness of the goals in terms of their own freshman year experience.

The college's administration and faculty had already determined that the program would be continued and expanded for a sixth year because strong evaluations from all three groups -- administration, faculty and students -- indicated that the goals had been carried out very well and very effectively (Process Evaluation).

However, at this point it was necessary to evaluate the goals of the course themselves (Product Evaluation). This was particularly true because the fifth year was a new pilot year for the program; we had integrated some sections of the Freshman Seminar with Writing Courses (Meyer, 1991) so that the students and professor(s) would be together for four credits and so that the professor, allocated six credits' worth of time, could be the academic adviser of the students enrolled in the integrated Freshman Seminar Writing Courses.

The two sections of students, members of the Class of 1995, who evaluated the goals did so as part of a final writing assignment, knowing that what they wrote would be "used to help plan this course for next year's freshmen," as had been done for them by two sections of students who were members of the Class of 1992 (Meyer, Nov.-Dec., 1991).

A specific writing assignment sheet and a reading guide question sheet about the published sources, whose authors ranged from nationally known experts

in higher education, to students and professors, to recognized magazine journalists, were prepared to focus students' evaluations and help them address the issues. Both of those items are included herein.

All student evaluators submitted two copies of their final essay, "The Freshman Experience: What I Learned." One was returned to the student with the professor's comments and a grade. The professor used the other unmarked copy to conduct a thematic, qualitative analysis of students' evaluations of the course goals.

Evaluations of three sets of goals were analyzed. Students evaluated goals set by prior students, administration, and the faculty member of the course. Scoring was qualitative/double emphasis. For example, if a student such as K.O. (paper attached) said that all the student goals were important, but that three of them were very important to her, each one of the student goals got one point, and the three which she indicated were important got an additional point. The same method was used for analysis of administrative and faculty goals. As a result, all three sets of goals can be given an order of priority.

Results show that the students' goals for the course have remained stable over time, but that as times have changed, there is a new order of priority for nine of the ten goals.

The administration's original six goals for the 1991-92 course were presented to faculty (and students) in numbered order without a specific statement of priority; this was an aid to faculty who were preparing their syllabi to meet the needs of a variety of students. Students clearly supported the administration's

goals and had little if any difficulty organizing them in priority order. In fact, they saw these as ten discrete goals and clearly evaluated their rank order of priority as such. The last two goals were ones students agreed to, but which they did not deem particularly important; however, these goals, which relate to academic honesty (particularly the avoidance of plagiarism and the acceptance of one's role as a responsible member of the academic community) are ones stressed in college reading/writing courses, so students may not have considered them administrative goals. But before the analysis of the student evaluation of the administration's goals could be completed, the administration presented continuing Freshman Seminar faculty with a new set of grouped, "unprioritized" goals; these were, and still are, in effect, and are intended as a "menu" from which faculty can choose to plan their courses. Barefoot (1993) reports that two-thirds of American colleges and universities offer freshman seminars, and of these courses, 20% fall into the category of academic courses.

The faculty goals addressed here deal only with the Freshman Seminar (College 101 Success) goals of the integrated course, not specifically with the usual syllabic goals of a college-level reading/writing course, which have been highlighted elsewhere (Meyer, 1992); therefore, these goals could have appeared "unprioritized" to students. As was the case with administrators' goals, students had no trouble sharing their order of priority for faculty members' goals.

Rank Order Priority Evaluation of Student to Student
Issues Crucial to Success for First Year Students

Class of 1992	Class of 1995
(1) Roommates Whose Values Differ Differ	(1) Grades, Study Habits, Time Management
(2) Relationships With Parents	(2) Roommates Whose Values Differ
(3) Weight (as a Problem)	(3) Being a Minority or International Student
(4) Grades, Study Habits, Time Management	(4) Relationships With Parents
(5) Drugs and Alcohol	(5) Sports Teams
(6) Coaches and Sports	(6) Career Goals
(7) Career Goals	(7) Weight (working out to control)
(8) Boyfriends & Girlfriends	(8) Alcohol and Drugs
(9) Being a Minority or International Student	(9) Boyfriends & Girlfriends
(10) Understanding One's Self in Relation to Students With Disabilities	(10) Understanding One's Self in relation to Students With Disabilities

The original goals for College 101, which became an Integrated Freshman Writing Seminar Course in the Fall of 1992, are found in the Ithaca College Academic Advising Newsletter of 12/89:

- (1) To improve students' success and satisfaction as students. To improve their understanding of what college is all about.
- (2) To help students assess and formulate their own educational goals.
- (3) To help students to understand important features of Ithaca College as an academic community, including:
 - the importance of academic honesty
 - the range of extracurricular and curricular opportunities
 - students' responsibilities as members of this community
 - the resources available to students.
- (4) To help students to understand the purposes of a liberal arts education and the curriculum at Ithaca College, including the relationship between a liberal arts education and career opportunities.
- (5) To help students to improve study skills, including time management.
- (6) To give students more contact with their advisers

Class of 1995 Rank Order Priority Evaluation of Administration's Goals for
an Integrated Freshman Writing Seminar

(1) To help students formulate and assess their own goals, particularly to help them plan their own individual career paths.

(2) To improve students' success and satisfaction as students. To improve their understanding of what college is all about.

(3) To help students to improve study skills, including time management.

(4) To give students more contact with their advisers.

(5) To help students understand...the resources available to students -- here 20% of the requests were for more individual and group counseling and more assistance for international students and students with disabilities.

(6) To help students understand the purposes of a liberal arts education and the curriculum at Ithaca College, including the relationship between a liberal arts education and career opportunities.

(7) To help students understand important features of Ithaca College as a community.

(8) To help students understand the range of extracurricular and curricular opportunities.

----- and, these did not receive any double points -----

(9) To help students understand the importance of academic honesty.

(10) To help students understand (their) responsibilities as members of this (academic) community.

Class of 1995 Rank Order Priority of Faculty Member's Goals for an
Integrated Freshman Writing Seminar

- (1) Career Exploration
- (2) Getting Along With Others
- (3) Communication with Professors
- (4) Studying for Exams (and Papers)
- (5) Individual Conferencing
- (6) Self Evaluation of the Freshman Experience

----- and, these did not receive double points -----

- (7) Schooling Versus Education
- (8) Equitable Opportunity.

College 101 Topics

Fall, 1992

Each professor was required by the administration to select and teach 2-3 topics from each of the following broad subtopics in College 101. Arrangements varied. There were still a few stand alone one-credit sections of the course; six sections were integrated Freshman Writing Seminars at 4 credits for the students; four sections were integrated with other Humanities and Sciences courses such as Speech Communication, Sociology, Philosophy, and Ancient Literature.

A. Personal Responsibility

- values and goals
- time/stress management
- study skills
- planning for a major/career
- learning styles (cognitive mapping/MyersBriggs)
- peer pressure/friendship/dating
- health issues: sleep/substance abuse/sex

B. Academic Responsibility

- academic honesty/freedom
- what does it mean to be "educated"
- differences between high school and college
- value of the liberal arts
- purpose/value of grades

- familiarity with support services on campus
- extracurricular/intellectual/cultural opportunities at IC

C. Social Responsibility

- diversity/social conflict in the IC Community
- gender/race/ethnicity/social class issues
- interaction between IC/Ithaca communities
- a wider perspective on the relationship/health issues included in the personal responsibility category.

References

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- Smolowe, J. (1992, April 13). The Pursuit of Excellence. TIME, pp. 59-60.
- Vesterman, W. (Ed.). (1989). The College Writer's Reader. New York: McGraw-Hill. (Chapter One includes the essays by Adler, Boyer, Hanauer, and McQuade also referred to in the Assignment Sheet).

Into. to College Writing

Name _____

#77-102, Dr. M. Meyer

Date _____

Questions for The Freshman Experience:

What I learned

(1) "Freshman Year: The Agony and the Ecstasy" by Cathi Hanauer. In what ways has your Freshman Experience been the same as Debbie's, Ursula's, and Julie's?

Have you had any experiences which were different from theirs?

Do you think the article presents a fair balance between academics and social life?

(2) "Smoothing the Transition from High School to College" by Ernest L. Boyer.

What factors influenced your choice of college?

What do you value most about Ithaca College?

Look at Boyer's suggestions to high school seniors about choosing a college; would you give them the same advice?

(3) "Integrating the Freshman Seminar With A Developmental Reading-Writing Course: by Margaret Dietz Meyer.

Are the 10 THEMES written by students of the Class of 1992 important to you, too? Are there any themes which you think are missing?

Do you think the Administration's goals for College 101 are realistic? Are any goals missing?

Do you think the teacher's goals are important? On target? Are any goals

missing from this list?

(4) This is an either/or option question; choose either article from TIME Magazine.

(a) "Campus of the Future" by John Elson.

Obviously, much of this article is about financial reasons why colleges will soon have to limit the variety of courses they offer.

Take the blurb, "By the year 1000, American colleges and universities will be lean and mean, service oriented and science minded, multicultural and increasingly diverse -- if they intend to survive their fiscal agony," and compare it with page 58.

How do you feel about multicultural studies?

What do you think of Robert Wood's three required courses which he says every student should take?

Overall, we have a good start on computer facilities at I.C. But, how would you like to see I.C.'s computer facilities improved in the future?

(b) "The Pursuit of Excellence" by Jill Smolowe.

Note the quote from Bressler on page 59.

What are the five reasons why America's system of college and universities has a cachet which appeals to students from all over the world?

(5) This is a short comparison/contrast question; you must respond to both essays.

"Schooling is not Education" by Mortimer J. Adler -- and --

"Response to Adler" by Jerry McQuade.

How does Adler define an educated person?

McQuade agrees with Adler up to a point; how does he disagree?

What advice would you give next year's freshmen?

Intro. to College Writing

Name _____

#77-102, Dr. M. Meyer

Date _____

ASSIGNMENT

Essay #5***The Freshman Experience: What I Learned***

Directions: Write a 5-6 page (1250-1500) thesis-driven expository essay on the topic. Your reaction will be very important because it will be used to help plan this course for next year's freshmen.

Because of the length and the importance of the topic, this paper will be worth **60 points**. (We will not have a grammar quiz during this unit).

Readings are due each day as per the schedule. After some discussion, I will give you a question to write about on the computers, and your answer to that question will be a part of the paper. Each "Question of the Day" will come from the "Reading of the Day." All Textbook readings come from Chapter I in The College Writer's Reader; the other readings are in this packet.

Mon. 4/20

Hanauer, p. 10 in the textbook. "Freshman Year"

Wed. 4/22

Boyer, p. 20 in the textbook. "Smoothing the Transition"

Fri. 4/24

Meyer, Summary and 5 pages of a paper (Xerox)

Mon. 4/27

TIME Magazine either Elson p. 54 "The Campus of the Future" or Smolowe p. 59

"The Pursuit of Excellence" (You don't have to write about both)

Wed. 4/29

Adler, p. 48 in the textbook. "Schooling is not Education" and McQuade p. 59 in the textbook, "Response to Adler."

As usual, papers will be graded for Ideas, Organization, Clarity, Sources, and Grammar, but the extra 10 points will be based on the *thoughtful quality* of the *ideas* in your *reaction*.

Intro. to College Writing

K.O.

#77-102, Dr. M. Meyer

May 6, 1992

Freshman Year

First-year students at college face a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience. The changes and the new environment can be very exciting or nerve-racking. In the essay, "Smoothing the Transition from High School to College," by Ernest L. Boyer, he describes some very disturbing information of how high school seniors choose college. "Freshman Year: The Agony and the Ecstasy," by Cathi Hanauer, describes the profiles of three women who have completed their freshman year at college, and their academic and not-so-academic experiences. The essay, "The Freshman Seminar: What do Developmental Students Want?" by Dr. Margaret Dietz Meyer, describes how some students felt about their freshman year, and gave advice to future freshman, professors, advisers, and administration. In the article, "The Pursuit of Excellence," by Jill Smolowe, she explained the five reasons why America's universities and colleges are the envy of the world. The essays, "Schooling Is Not Education," by Mortimer J. Adler, and "Untitled Response to Adler," by Jerry McQuade, describe how both authors view education by schools and colleges. My freshman year experiences at college were both good and bad, but I learned a lot about myself during this last year. My main advice to freshman next year would be: learn how to manage your time, be yourself, and exercise.

- I had many factors that influenced my college choice. For instance, I wanted

a college somewhere in the east coast, not more than ten hours away from home, not more than 10,000 undergraduates, and the school of my choice would have to have a variety of people. Ithaca College fit my description perfectly. I visited Ithaca College in the fall of '90 and I loved the campus. Although it was only the third college campus that I've seen, I knew that it was probably one of the most beautiful college campuses in the U.S. I was impressed with Ithaca's academic record, and the professors at the institution. What I value most at Ithaca College is a combination of classes, social events, and scenery. I really enjoy all of my classes, and the professors are great. I like the idea that my classes are small, the teachers know my name, and that I'm not a number. The friends that I've made here are wonderful, sincere, caring, and friendly. We always go out together, and whether it be at a party or club we always make new friends. I think Ithaca, New York, is one of the most beautiful places in the world (when it's not raining). The gorges are magnificent, and the environment is peaceful and relaxed. I agree with Boyer in his essay, "Smoothing the Transition from High School to College," that most students today "choose a college almost blindly". I think that I would give students the same advice he does. Especially for students to know their options and keep them open, and for schools and colleges to give helpful guidance.

My first semester at Ithaca College was a lot like Debbie's, from the essay, "The Agony and the Ecstasy," by Cathi Hanauer. My experiences were similar to Debbie's in many way. But, the one that stands out the most was the roommate situation. Like Debbie, I spoke to my future roommates on the phone. I thought I

was lucky to have two roommates, but now I know differently. Cady was from Connecticut, Jen was from Wisconsin, and I'm from Long Island. These three different environments didn't mix too well. For example, Cady had late classes, and Jen and I had early classes. This caused most of our problems. Jen and I would always go to bed a lot earlier than Cady, and Cady would always come stumbling into the room around 2 a.m., turning on all the lights. Jen and I became frustrated asking Cady several times not to turn on all the lights. So, we decided to handle things our own way, and before Jen and I would go to bed, we would remove all of the light bulbs and hide them. Cady learned the hard way to turn on only one light. I guess the three of us were just too different to live together, and by the second semester of school Cady moved out.

My second semester was a lot like Julie's and Ursula's. I studied all the time during my first semester, and like Julie I got an attitude like, "Well, I can do it" (17). Its true that it is easy to put things off in college. So, like Julie I went out more, and I realized that I wasn't studying enough. Luckily for me, I caught myself just in time to save some of my grades. Although my GPA will not be as high, I learned my limits on how much studying and partying I could do. I realized, like Ursula, I enjoyed living in a coed dorm. The guys in my dorm were like brothers, they were always in my room, and hanging-out. I believe that I have changed a little bit since school started; I look at things in a different way now. I guess it is because I have been exposed to so many different environments, and types of people. But, like Ursula, I believe that "college is accepting many

different things and learning about things that you never thought you wanted to learn about" (15).

I agree with all of the themes listed in the article, "Integrating the Freshman Seminar with a Developmental Reading-Writing Course," by Dr. Margaret Dietz Meyer. But, I feel that the most crucial issues dealing with adjusting to college are: Roommates whose values differ, Drugs and Alcohol, and Grades, Study Habits, and Time Management. I think that it is really important for roommates to get along, especially freshman year. Freshman year is a time when a lot of people are vulnerable because they are in a new environment, school, and away from home and friends. Drugs and alcohol is another major issue freshman have to adjust to. College is a lot different from home. Alcohol and drugs are at every party, and easy to obtain. Freshman have to be able to deal with these types of situations. Organizing time is something we all have to do. They have to be able to draw the line between partying and studying. I think that prejudices should be added to the list. When I first arrived here, I realized that some people could be really prejudiced--even over small items. For example, I found that some of the people here are prejudiced about religion, origin, and incomes. I think that the eight key elements that the teacher wanted to integrate with a developmental course are important. They are on target and help make the I.C. administration goals for college 101 realistic.

In the article, "The Pursuit of Excellence," by Jill Smolowe, she describes five reasons why the American system of colleges and universities has a cachet

which appeals to students from all over the world. The first reason why foreigners come to American schools is because they are shut out of the system at home. Some European and Asian universities provide an elite service to a small and privileged clientele. "The egalitarian conception that everyone has a right to an education appropriate to his potential is a highly democratic and compassionate standard" (59). The second reason is the development of flexibility in American higher education. For example, "At 35, you can decide to go back to college, upgrade your education, change your profession" (59). Americans may take this for granted, but other countries do not. Many countries expect students at age 16 to pick a university and a specific course of study. Third, many are attracted not only to the academic programs at a particular U.S. college but also to the larger community, which affords the chance to soak up the surrounding culture. "In America it is assumed that a student's daily life is as important as his learning experience" (60). The fourth reason is foreign students come in search of choices. Most American universities insist that the students sample natural and social sciences, languages, and literature before choosing a field. In other countries, students must demonstrate expertise in a single field. Finally, the independent spirit of the American university that foreigners admire comes down to dollars and cents. "U.S. students pay for their education, and demand a commensurate value for what they or their parents pay" (60).

In the article, "Schooling Is Not Education," by Mortimer J. Adler, he describes what he believes is an educated person. He feels that schooling is for

the young, and education comes much later. Adler stated, "The very best thing for our schools to do is to prepare the young for continued learning in later life by giving them the skills of learning and the love of it" (49). He believes that only mature men and women can become educated, beginning the process in their 40's and 50's and reaching some modicum of genuine insight, sound judgement and practical wisdom after they have turned 60. He also stated, "our schools and colleges are not doing their part because they are trying to do everything else. And adults are not doing their part because most are under the illusion that they had completed their education when they finished their schooling" (50). In the article, "Untitled Response to Adler," by Jerry McQuade, the author agrees with Adler, but he also points out that sometimes the person who learns depends too much on those who teach. McQuade agrees with Adler that no college or university can truly educate its students by the time they graduate. He feels that education and wisdom can be obtained at any age by work and the will to learn. McQuade, stated, "A person's education is the most important aspect of his life, and it should be the individual's responsibility to develop and continue his education, not his college's" (52). Finally, he believes that colleges can only teach; learning must be done by the student.

In the article, "Smoothing the Transition from High School to College," by Boyer, he describes how high seniors randomly choose college. The article, "Freshman Year: The Agony and the Ecstasy." by Cathi Hanauer, describes three women's freshman year experiences. The essay, "The Freshman Seminar: What

Do Developmental Studies Want?" by Meyer, describes how some students felt after freshman year, and their advice to future freshmen, advisors, and professors. In the article, "The Pursuit of Excellence," Smolowe describes why American colleges are the envy of the world. Finally, in the article, "Schooling Is Not Education," and "Untitled Response to Adler," by Adler and McQuade, they both describe their views on educations by schools and colleges. My advice for freshmen next year is simple. I think that they should learn how to organize their time, be themselves, and get plenty of exercise. I think that if freshmen can learn how to organize their time, they would be all set for college. At college it is so easy to fall behind in work, and once a person knows the difference between working and playing, college is a lot easier. I also think that it is important to be yourself. Nobody likes someone who is fake or phony, so just act like yourself, and let other people appreciate you for who you are. Finally, I think that freshman should exercise often. Not only because it helps to avoid "freshman fifteen" but, because it helps you to relax and ease stress from school anxiety. I'm a little upset that my freshman year at college is completed, but I also wouldn't want to do it again!

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